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I was born on August 2, 1856, in Keene, New Hampshire, where my father had a parish and where I lived until I was twenty-two years old. I have always felt it an advantage for a child to live in the country, and Keene was a beautiful town surrounded by hills with a mountain in the distance, and with a river and brooks and woods, so that there was out-of-door life all the year around. In the spring we used to go on drives or walks for the early wild flowers, may-flowers, trilliums, violets, and many others. Summer was a gay time with visitors from other towns, and picnics and tea-parties in their honor, and in the autumn the drives were especially delightful because of the gay foliage and the invigorating air. In winter there was deep snow, and like "Molly, when she was six", I had the fun of coasting on a big black sled with my father and some small friend, down a hill and across a little icy pond at the bottom. We built snow houses in front of our house of bricks cut out of the crust, and besides the regular sleigh-rides to the accompaniment of jingling sleigh-bells, we used to fasten our sleds to the slowly moving ox teams.

My quiet life was varied by visits to larger places, and we always spent August, the month of my father's vacation, away from Keene, and sometimes, to my great joy, we were by the sea.

When I was eleven my father took me to Boston to hear Charles Dickens read, and we sat in the very front row, and I enjoyed hearing him read the trial from Pickwick just as much as if I were a grown-up person. As I sat in the seat directly opposite ^{Dickens} ~~him~~, he looked at me from time to time, and I was sure he was admiring my new gray cape trimmed with a border of white plush. I thought it very pretty, myself.

My mother's father, Chester Harding, the portrait painter, lived in Springfield, and I can remember seeing him putting the finishing touches to a picture of General Sherman. I was not quite five when



the Civil War began and so it made the great excitement of my childhood for my mother had two brothers on one side and two on the other. I asked my father if they had newspapers before the war, and when he said, "Yes," I said, "What did they put in them?" I made a comfort bag for a soldier and sent these verses with it:

"I think your name begins with J,
Mamma thinks it begins with A.
When you write please tell it me.
Who is right we then shall see."

To my great delight I got a letter from the soldier, saying, "The little girl is right, my name is John."

My early experiences made me able to write "The Blue Aunt" and "The Strange Year" about the world war, as I knew just how the children were feeling.

I went to the excellent public schools in Keene, although I never graduated from the High School, as a very severe attack of typhoid fever that almost ended my life came at the beginning of my senior year. The next year, when I was seventeen, I went to a very delightful small boarding and day school in Roxbury, Massachusetts, kept by Miss Louisa Hall. Three years later I went abroad for a year with my father and mother and younger sister, taking the usual trip through England and Scotland and the Continent.

I began to write as soon as I could hold a pencil, and at the age of eleven I and my great friend, who was almost three years older, decided that we would write historical romances, after the style of Sir Walter Scott. My mother was reading us Dickens's "Child's History of England," and we took the period of the Red and White Roses. I still have the small volume, in my scrawling hand, for my mother was kind enough to have our stories bound just like real books in dark red, with the titles in gilt

1870. The following day, Sunday, the 11th, the weather was fine and the
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letters. It was many years later before my first book for children, "When Molly was Six" was published, and I had already published two novels, "Miss Brooks" and "Winterborough." "Molly", and its successor, "A Little Girl of Long Ago," the story of my mother's childhood, found so many readers that for the last twenty years my published work has been exclusively for children.

I have been fortunate, both in Keene, and in Brookline, where I have lived since 1881, in having so much land around the house, that it has made a fine home for birds and animals. In Brookline we have always had one or more cats. If one of our favorites leaves us, another is sure to appear and in every way but actual speech begs to be taken in. In spite of the succession of cats that have chosen to make their home with us, down to "Sally in her Fur Coat," who with her daughter still does us the honor to preside over our kitchen, the birds do not hesitate to come to our piazza all through the winter for their food generously provided for them by my housemate. Even now, when since the town has bought some of my land and turned our quiet corner into a highway for automobiles, there are many feathered creatures around the place, and this very season, in addition to the ever present blue jays and sparrows, a woodpecker and a scarlet tanager have been seen, and a grosbeak and a wood thrush have been heard.

I am unmarried and have no nieces or nephews,^{so} I have had very little to do with children, but I have the advantage of remembering how I felt when I was a child, and I know how I always preferred the society of a small friend of my own age to that of the most sympathetic grown person, so I do not expect too much from my younger friends. When my father, as a very small boy, was being severely taken to task by a grown-up sister for something he had done, he said, "You was chillons once, Sister Eliza." I often think of his words and realize that what seems

like wilful mischief to an older person is often an accident caused by curiosity or high spirits. One of the reasons why I still find so much pleasure in writing for children is that the world of make-believe is of almost as great interest to me as to them. I am flattered when my five year old neighbor brings a new toy to show me. As we sit on my piazza and I hold her doll while she is cooking imaginary food, our silver dishes may look to an outsider like the covers to cans, and our dessert may seem to be dirt, but we know that it is chocolate icecream, and that the twigs with which we seem to be eating it are really silver spoons from the Arts and Crafts.

The good thing about having an imagination is that it can defy time, and bridge the gap between childhood and what to the uninitiated looks like age.

